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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000540

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: UNMIT ADDRESSES SECURITY ISSUES

11. (SBU) Summary: UNMIT sees ongoing disturbances in Dili becoming more organized and UNPOL notes drug related behavior and evidence that payments are being made to perpetrators. Recognizing the counterproductive effect of freeing most of those of those arrested after only a short period of detention, UNMIT is meeting with prosecutors in an attempt to devise better means of holding key offenders for longer periods. Despite the escalated level of violence in the past week, the UN is not raising its threat level beyond its current Phase Two. In response to concerns raised by the diplomatic corps, UNPOL provided assurances of increased attention to any movements directed toward the area where most embassies and diplomatic residences are located. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In an October 27 meeting with chiefs of diplomatic missions and international agencies, UNMIT acting SRSG Finn Reske-Nielsen and acting UNPOL Police Commissioner Antero Lopes provided an overview of the security situation in Dili from their perspective. Lopes had only sketchy reports regarding killings and related clashes earlier on October 27, but noted that the situation had been brought under control. (Note: Two fish vendors from a Lorosae (eastern) dominated market were ambushed and killed, apparently by a gang of Loromonu (western) youth, while waiting to purchase fish from incoming boats in the beach-front area West of the US Embassy.) In regard to the escalated violence of the past week, Lopes stressed the following points:

- Disturbances are more organized, and homicides are increasing.
- The current hotspots are Fatuhada (the neighborhood behind the U.S. and other diplomatic missions), Bebonuk (just west of the Embassy where the October 27 murders took place), and the Comoro/Airport area.
- Martial arts groups such as "77" and "SHT" have been heavily involved.
- Incidents usually begin with skirmishes involving individuals and grow into clashes of groups, generally of no more than 40 persons, but in the October 24 conflict around the airport groups of as many as 300 were observed.
- Evidence of drug-related behavior beginning to be seen among perpetrators, as well as many reports of payments being made to participants in the violence.

13. (SBU) In regard to the October 24 clashes around the airport

which involved the highest levels of violence here in recent months, Lopes noted that:

- 200 UNPOL were engaged in the operation, including the Portuguese, Malaysian and Bangladeshi formed units.
- The casualty toll among Timorese was two killed, 5 injured, while two Portuguese GNR received minor injuries and 6 UNPOL vehicles were damaged.
- An Australian ISF member fired on an armed Timorese assailant but there is no evidence the Timorese was hit (contrary to some media reports).
- Gunshots were directed at UNPOL in the Fatuhada area but no casualties resulted.

¶4. (SBU) The acting SRSG and Lopes acknowledged that the inability of the judicial system to process cases was resulting in most of those arrested quickly being released. Lopes said arrests for the more minor offenses were minimal, because it was realized that the process of holding perpetrators for only a short time actually was counter productive, since they then returned to the streets as "heroes who had beat the system." Reske-Nielsen said UNMIT consulting closely with prosecutors to devise more effective means of processing cases within the limitations of existing judicial resources to ensure that the worst perpetrators could be held for longer periods.

¶5. (SBU) Despite the escalated level of violence in the past week, the UN is not raising its threat level beyond the current Phase Two, i.e., restricting some movements but keeping all staff and dependents in country. A number of the heads of diplomatic missions expressed concern about the increasing proximity of the violence to the area where most diplomatic missions are located. Lopes provided assurances that while UNPOL may not always be visible in the immediate vicinity of the diplomatic establishments, in coordination with JTF they were carefully monitoring all the approaches to the area and moving

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to intercept any movements of groups in that direction.
GRAY